

Put Another Log on the Fire

I first heard this song back in 1974, and it has stuck with me through the years (please don't ask me to explain why). In the chorus, a husband says to his wife:

*Put another log on the fire / Cook me up some bacon and some beans / Go out to the car and change the tire / Wash my socks and sew my old blue jeans
Come on, Baby, you can fill my pipe and then go fetch my slippers / And boil me up another pot of tea / Then put another log on the fire, Babe / And come and tell me why you're leaving me.*

Shel Silverstein, Put Another Log on the Fire

Happily, most marriages involve a better division of labor than this one. And so does God's family, the Church, when it operates the way God designed it. This week we will see how God, in his wonderful grace, made a place for you and me to give and to receive.

Monday – Saying Grace

"He rides pleasantly enough whom the grace of God carries." Thomas a' Kempis, The Imitation of Christ

1. Please read Romans 12:1-8, and then re-read the opening words of verse 3. What is the foundation for Paul's comments in the rest of this passage? The word "grace" comes from an ancient root that also gives us the words "grateful" and "agree." How do these related words help you understand Paul's reliance on God's grace in writing these instructions?
2. See Isaiah 1:16-18. Following God's instructions in these verses will lead to speech that is filled with his grace. What are the instructions in these verses? How will they generate grace in your life and speech?

Making it Personal: In what way(s) do you think your speech could change to fall more in line with God's grace?

Tuesday – Grace/Faith

"In proportion to the size of the vessel of faith, brought by us to the Lord, is the measure we draw out of His overflowing grace." Cyprian, 3rd c. bishop and Christian writer

1. Please read Romans 12:3-8. Which words used in verse 3 are repeated in verse 6? Which are identified as being given by God in verse 3? In verse 6?
2. Now look at John 1:17 and Hebrews 12:2. Who is the source of grace and faith?
3. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, what is the great benefit of God's gifts of faith and grace?

Making it Personal: Pray, asking God to show you how you can honor our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the source of all grace and faith.

Wednesday – A Self Assessment Test

"We are all worms. But I do believe I am a glowworm." Winston Churchill, 20th c. British Prime Minister

1. Please read Romans 12:3. What does Paul tell us we should do? How are we to do it?
2. Read Exodus 3:9-12, 4:10-13. How did Moses respond to God's calling? Did Moses think more or less of himself than he ought?
3. Read Isaiah 6:1-13. How did Isaiah respond to God's call? Did he think too much of himself? Too little? In light of verse 10, what was God's view of Isaiah's response?

Digging Deeper: Take a look at Exodus 4:1-17. While Moses complained (*Can't you send someone else?*), Isaiah volunteered (*Here I am, send me*). God answered each of them accordingly (Exodus 4:14-17, Isaiah 6:10). What does this reveal about God's character? About his relationship with those he calls?

Thursday – Body Building

"The bible knows nothing of solitary religion." John Wesley, 18th c. English preacher and missionary

1. Please read Romans 12:4-5. What does Paul say about each person who belongs to Christ?
2. Take a look at Colossians 1:17-18. How does Paul describe Christ's role over those who belong to him? What assurance does this give you about your place in God's family?

Digging Deeper - See Ephesians 2:14-22 for a different way to describe those Christ gathers together. How would verses 19-22 help you respond to someone who claims they can belong to God but don't need church?

Text insight: The Greek word translated as "church" in the New Testament is *ecclesia*, meaning "called out." Related words from the same root are "claim" and "reconcile," so the church is made up of those God *claims* as his own in order that we can be *reconciled* to him.

Friday – Gracious Gifts

"All is vanity but to love and serve Him." Thomas a' Kempis, The Imitation of Christ

1. Please read Romans 12:6-8. What does Paul say about the Body of Christ? About your place in that body? Which gift do you think Paul is using in writing this letter to the Christians in Rome?
2. Would you characterize this list as inward focused (for the benefit of the individual) or outward (for the benefit of the church)? Try to put this truth in your own words, as if you were describing this truth to a friend.
3. Take a look at 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. What insight does this passage give us about the manner in which we are to use the various gifts God has given us?

Prayer Focus: Pray for yourself and others in the church, that we may understand and carry out the responsibility we all have - to God and each other - to use God's gifts wisely, faithfully, gracefully.

For the Weekend: Read Hebrews 10:24-25, and consider the emphasis on unity in Romans 12:5 along with the diversity emphasized in 12:6. What should you be doing in light of these instructions?